Daryl S. Feature Story

On Veteran's Day in 2010, RCHP-AHC, held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the opening of the converted All Saints Church, on the corner of Magnolia Street and S. 3rd Avenue in Highland Park, to an apartment building for homeless veterans.

Daryl Steinback, now aged 65, moved into All Saints in 2014. He had owned a trailer home in a trailer park in Toms River but fell behind on his payments and lost his home. He stayed at Lyons VA Medical Center for six months and in 2014 was shortlisted as a possible tenant for a studio apartment at All Saints. "I was happy when I got the call that they had chosen me!"

Born and raised in West Covina, CA, Daryl enlisted in the Army at age 19 and served a total of 18 years in active duty and the Army Reserve. He was deployed to Kuwait during the Gulf War for Desert Storm and ended his tour of duty after two years; understandably, Daryl doesn't want to revisit those memories. Upon returning home, he got a job as a security guard.

Prior to Kuwait, Daryl was stationed in Germany and Korea. He talked about getting out and about while in Germany: "We had what we called 'barracks brats'. They just wanted to stay in the barracks and didn't want to go out and explore. I would tour around the town and one time I even got to go skiing! Another time I was invited for Christmas dinner by a host family."

Daryl started walking dogs in 2014. His friend and fellow tenant, Ted, introduced Daryl to an elderly couple in Highland Park who needed help. Ted and Daryl would take turns walking Elijah Blue and Chuva, and became a common sight around town. Ted eventually passed away, and so Daryl walks them three times a day, Monday through Friday.

"I like to get out, otherwise I get cabin fever. Walking the dogs, I get to spend time outdoors, see what's happening in the neighborhood.".

Daryl was close friends with fellow tenant “Army Frank”, and they would often watch Wheel of Fortune and Jeopardy together, competing with each other while they watched. “Frank would say, ‘how do you know all those answers to the Bible questions?’ and I’d say ‘because I read the Bible’”

Daryl was baptized in a Baptist church in California when he was 25 years old. “My nieces kept bugging me - ‘c’mon Uncle Daryl!’ I was in the church choir and taught first graders at Sunday School. I would dress up sometimes, depending on the bible passage we were studying. One time I dressed up as Moses. You gotta keep them interested or they’ll just get bored.”

Not long after Daryl moved into All Saints, Pastor Seth invited him to a church service. Daryl recalls what one woman said to him the first time he attended. “She said ‘thank you for being a gentleman and taking your hat off’.’ I was taught that a man always removes his hat when he enters a church.”

Daryl has two sisters and one brother who live in Kansas, California and Texas. His mom died 20 years ago from a heart attack. He’s never been married and has no children (he had a fiancé, but she was killed in a tragic accident by a drunk driver). Daryl moved from California to New Jersey in 2010 to be near his stepdad, who passed away not long after.

Daryl knows all the people in his building. “It’s a nice place to live – we all get along”. He tries to be helpful to his fellow tenants by taking in package deliveries and letting AHC Housing know when a tenant has been taken to the hospital. AHC maintenance workers are particularly grateful to Daryl for always taking out and bringing in the trash and recycling bins for the whole building.

He likes to connect with people of all ages in the neighborhood, as well. This past Halloween, he stood outside of All Saints handing out candy to the trick-or-treaters (see photo on page 1).

Since 2014, Daryl has been active with the VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) Post 370 out of New Brunswick, hosted by the Elks Lodge 324. The VFW fosters camaraderie among and advocates for veterans, serves the military, and serves the community (with initiatives such as canned food drives). He goes to meetings and attends monthly lunches hosted by the Stage House Tavern in Somerset.

Last November and December, Daryl arranged meal deliveries for all the tenants at All Saints for both Thanksgiving and Christmas; all food was provided by Stage House. "It made me feel good to do that for my neighbors." Most recently, Daryl coordinated with the Post to arrange for new sneakers and jackets for all residents.

Asked what thoughts went through his head after he had unpacked all of his belongings when he first moved into All Saints, he said "I'm doing the right thing."

We wish to thank all veterans for their faithful service. If you or someone you know could benefit from getting involved with VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) Post 370 out of New Brunswick, please contact imdbest4248@hotmail.com or visit this website *to find a post near you.*

If you'd like to contribute to the ongoing housing mission of RCHP-AHC, please visit our Donation page. https://rchp-ahc.org/donate/